CONDENSED CLASSICS

THE ARABIAN NIGHTS

By the PRINCESS SHEHERAZADE

Condensation by Alfred S. Clark

The marvellous tales that Scheherasade told to King Shahriar, stories of love and adventure and mad magic cannot be attributed to any one author for the very good reason that there never was an author. They are popular stories that, perhaps about the year 1450, were put into the present form by a professional story-teller, presumably a Persian.

In primitive communities where few of the people can read, and where books are difficult to get, these professional readers are in great demand. They pick up here and there tales that appeal to all and bind them into a long narrative. Some people have thought that Homer's long poems originated in this way.

Everywhere in the near east the traveler finds these story-tellers today. An eager audience collects to hear them, each paying a small fee for the privilege of listening. The entertainer declaims as he walks to and fro and always stops his narrative just before an exciting climax, so that he will be assured of listeners on the morrow. His audience follows his recital with breathless interest, especially when he illustrates thrilling episodes with lively pantomime.

Year after year these groups of listeners gathered centuries ago. The story-teller discarded the tales that did not hold the attention of his listeners. Gradually the process of elimination went on until only the best were handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation. Then some unknown benefactor of mankind had them written down and connected them with the framework of Scheherasade and Shahriar. And these are the Arabian Nights that have delighted children and grown men and women for decades.

SHEHERAZADE was a vizier's daughter and when she besought her father to wed her to King Shahriar it was cause for grief to the vizier. For each day was it Shahriar's wont to put to death his bride of the day before. It befell, however, that Sheherazade had her will. As she had hoped, the king was wakeful and to beguile him she began a story of magic. Dawn broke before she had finished and so eager was Shahriar to hear it all that he gave no order for her execution.

For a thousand and one nights did this befall while Sheherazade told tales of love, war and sorcery, of kings, beggars and rogues, of lands where diamonds were more plentiful than pebbles and bigger than eggs, of intrigues in the lanes and bazaars of Oriental cities. In towns and deserts and far islands did necromancers work their wills. Horses flew; dogs talked; mermaidens and creatures greater than whales peopled the deeps; ogres and enormous apes crept out of forests; birds so great that their wings darkened the day swooped from the skies. Here, too, were lovers in palaces and hovels, bold and cowardly, yet all so enamored that they swooned at the very thought of the beloved. Underlying all was the colorful Orient, with barbers and porters jostling caliphs and princesses in the thronged and picturesque lanes of three cities whose very names conjure up romance—Bagdad, Cairo and Damascus.

Now these are the best liked of Sheherazade's tales:

The Story of Aladdin's Lamp.

Of Aladdin, son of a poor tailor in China, a prankish scamp. An African magician guided him to a subterranean cave where he found the lamp that summoned the genie. Out of nothingness did this genie spread banquets for Aladdin and robe him in rich raiment. He provided him retinues of slaves, bearing basins heaped high with precious stones, who carried to the king Aladdin's suppliance for the hand of the beautiful Princess Badroulboudour. In a night did the genie raise a palace of glowing wonders, of shining marble and gold and silver, with windows incrusted with diamonds, emeralds and rubies, with fragrant gardens and open courts. So Aladdin married the princess and they knew great joy. But the magician returned, stole the lamp and in a trice transported the palace and the princess to Africa. Then was Aladdin woeful, but by magic he found his beloved, poisoned the magician, seized the lamp and came to China, where he and Badroulboudour lived happily ever afterward.

The Story of Sinbad.

Of Sinbad the sailor and his marvelous voyages. Wherein it is related that Sinbad landed upon what seemed an island but which was a great fish that sank into the sea. And of other voyages and greater wonders, of which one marvels most at the adventure with the roc, the bird so huge that it feeds its young with elephants. Sinbad had fastened himself to the roc's leg and it bore him to an impenetrable valley strewn with precious stones from which he escaped by binding himself to a sheep's carcass and was borne away by a vulture. And of the giant who roasted men and whom Sinbad blinded with a red-hot iron. And of the terrible Old Man of the Sea who sat upon Sinbad's shoulders and could not be shaken off until he was intoxicated with wine and Sinbad slew him.

The Story of the Forty Thieves.

Of Ali Baba and his discovery of the stone that swung wide when a voice cried "Open, Sesame!" In the cave was the booty of forty thieves and Ali Baba took home sacks bulging with gold and silver. The robbers traced him and, in the guise of a merchant the captain lodged with him. In the yard were stored great jars, one filled with oil and the others concealing the thieves. Ill would it have fared with Ali Baba had not Morgiana, a cunning slave, detected the trick and with boiling oil scalded to death the wicked miscreants. The captain escaped, but returned in a new disguise and again did Morgiana save her master by stabbing his enemy. So Ali Baba married her to his son and he lived joyously upon treasures from the cave.

Many Other Fascinating Stories.

Of the Magic Horse of ebony and ivory, so fashioned that its rider, by pressing divers buttons, could fly whither he willed. It bore a Persian prince to a great palace in a metropolis girt about with greenery. There he looked into the eyes of a princess and they were enraptured. It befell that they rode away on the Magic Horse, but before they were wed an evil man abducted the princess. The disconsolate prince wandered far and at last he found her whom he loved and again they journeyed through the air to his home, where they were married with exceeding pomp and lived happily.

Of a poor fisherman who drew his net from the sea and found therein but a brass bottle. He cut open the top and there streamed forth a cloud of smoke. It collected and, behold! it was a genie, so huge that his head was in the clouds. He would have killed his rescuer had not the wily fisherman insisted that never could he have come from the bottle. The silly genie squeezed himself inside, whereupon the fisherman clapped on the top, nor would he remove it until the genie swore to serve him faithfully. This oath it was that led to the finding of the ensorcelled prince with legs turned to stone and the lake wherein swam fish of four colors that had once been men. After marvelous happenings the prince was made as other men and the fish were men and women. And the fisherman was so rewarded that he was the wealthiest man of his time.

Of Prince Camaralzaman and the Princess Badoura, beautiful beyond compare, and of how each saw the other in sleep and was smitten with great love. But when they awakened they saw not one another for they had been brought together by genii who had carried Badoura out of China to the confines of Persia. Grief so afflicted both that they sickened and were insane from sorrow. Then a messenger from Badoura journeyed far over land and sea until he found Camaralzaman and returned with him to China, where the lovers were wedded. But while they were traveling to Camaralzaman's land he wandered away. Badoura dressed herself in his raiment and passed herself for a man. It befell that she found favor in the eyes of a king and was married to a princess. And Camaralzaman too came to this land and knew not his wife, who heaped honors upon him. At last she revealed herself and was known as a woman and Camaralzaman took also to wife the princess whom Badoura had married and they were happy together.

Of a merchant who, awaiting death at the hands of a cruel genie, was joined by three old men, one leading a gazelle, another two black hounds, and the third a mule. Now it is related that the gazelle and the mule had been wicked wives transformed by magic and likewise had the hounds been evil brothers. When the genie was told these stories of enchantment, he was so diverted that he spared the merchant's life.

About Harun-al-Rashid.

And of many tales concerning the Caliph Harun-al-Rashid and his going disguised into the lanes and bazaars of Bagdad, where he chanced upon strange people who told him strange stories of magic. Once he supped with three ladies of dazzling beauty and with him were a porter dazed with the magnificence he saw and three mendicants, sons of kings, all blind in the left eye. Not knowing the Caliph they told of their fantastic adventures and sufferings and he rewarded them. And again he encountered a beggar who implored him to strike him, a youth who spurred cruelly a mare upon which he rode and a rope-maker who had risen suddenly from poverty to affluence. Their tales too did he hear and them too did he reward. Nor should Abu-Hassan, the wag, be forgotten, whose trickery in pretending that he and his wife were dead won so much gold and so many laughs from the Caliph. And of like import is the mad tale of the humpback who seemed dead and of the talkative barber who restored him to life, of all those who had believed themselves murderers of the humpback and of the amazing tales that they related.

So it came to pass that by the end of the thousand and one nights Shahriar was so delighted in the cleverness of Sheherazade that he wedded her again with regal pomp and they lived happily ever after.

LADY LARKSPUR

By MEREDITH NICHOLSON

CHAPTER IV—Continued.

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As they resumed their talk Alice, it seemed, was relating something of moment for Arrowsmith's benefit, referring now and then to Mrs. Farnsworth as though for corroboration. The scene in the box was almost as interesting as any in the play, and the audience watched with deep absorption. Alice, the least self-conscious of mortals, was, I knew, utterly unaware of the curious gaze of the house; whatever she was saying with an occasional gesture of her gloved hand or a shrug of her shoulders possessed her completely. I thought she might be telling Arrowsmith of her adventures at Barton; but the length of her narrative was against this, and Arrowsmith's attitude was more that of a critic appealed to for an opinion than of a polite listener to a story. He nodded his head several times, and finally, as Alice, with a slight dip of the head and an outward movement of her arms, settled back in her chair, he patted his hands approvingly.

In my absorption I had forgotten Montani's existence, but as the third act began I saw that he had gone. Whether I should put myself in Alice's way as she left the theater was still an undetermined question when the play ended. With Montani hanging about I felt a certain obligation to warn her that he had been watching her. I was among the first to leave, and in the foyer I met Forsythe, the house manager, who knew me as a friend of Searles.

"You notice that we're still turning 'em away," he remarked. "We don't have to worry about this piece; everybody who sees it sends his friends the next day. Searles hasn't looked in for some time; hope he's writing a new play?"

"He's West visiting his folks. Don't know when he'll be back," I answered. "I must write him that Sir Cecil Arrowsmith enjoyed 'Who Killed Cock Robin?' just as much as common mortals."

Forsythe had paused at the box-office, and in my uncertainty I stuck to him as the crowd began to surge by.

Arrowsmith's approach was advertised by the peculiar type of tall hat that he affected, and the departing audience made way for him, or hung back to stare. At his left were Alice and Mrs. Farnsworth, and they must pass quite close to me. "Who Killed Cock Robin?" was a satisfying play that sent audiences away with lightened hearts and smiling faces, and the trio were no exception to the rule.

Listening inattentively to Forsythe, I was planning to join Alice when the trio should reach me. She saw me; there was a fleeting flash of recognition in her eyes, and then she turned toward Arrowsmith. She drew nearer; her gaze met mine squarely, but now without a sign to indicate that she had ever seen me before. She passed on, talking with greatest animation to Arrowsmith.

"Well, remember me to Searles if you write him," I heard Forsythe saying. I clutched his arm as he opened the office door.

"Who are those women?" I demanded.

"You may search me! I see you have a good eye. That girl's rather nice to look at!"

Crowding my way to the open, I blocked the path of orderly, sane citizens awaiting their machines until a policeman pushed me aside. Alice I saw for a bewildering instant, framed in the window of a big limousine that rolled away uptown.

I had been snubbed! No snub had ever been delivered more deliberately, with a nicer calculation of effect, than that administered to me by Alice Bashford—a girl with whom, until a moment before, I had believed myself on terms of cordial comradeship. She had cut me; Alice who had asked me at the very beginning of our acquaintance to call her by her first name—Alice had cut me without the quiver of a lash.

I walked to the Thackeray and settled myself in a dark corner of the reading room, thoroughly bruised in spirit. In my resentment I meditated flying to Ohio to join Searles, always my chief resource in trouble. Affairs at Barton might go to the devil. If Alice and her companion wanted to get rid of me, I would not be sorry to be relieved of the responsibility I had assumed in trying to protect them. With rising fury I reflected that by the time they had shaken off Montani and got rid of the prisoner in the tool house they would think better of me.

"Telephone call, sir."

I followed the boy to the booth in a rage that any one should disturb my gloomy reflections.

"Mr. Singleton? Oh! This is Alice speaking—"

I clutched the shelf for support. Not only was it Alice speaking, but in the kindest voice imaginable. My anger passed, but my amazement at Alice and all her ways blinded me. If she had suddenly stepped through the wall, my surprise could not have been greater.

"You told me the Thackeray was your usual refuge in town, so I thought I'd try it. Are you very, very cross? I'm sorry, really I am—Bob!"

The "Bob" was added lingeringly, propitiating. Huddled in the booth, I doubted my senses—wondering indeed whether Alice hadn't a double—even whether I hadn't dreamed everything that had occurred at Barton.

"I wanted to speak to you ever so much at the theater, but I couldn't very well without introducing you to Sir Cecil, and I wasn't ready to do that. It might have caused complications."

If anything could have multiplied the existing complications, I was anxious to know what they were; but her voice was so gentle, so wholly amiable, that I restrained an impulse to demand explanations.

"Are you on earth or are you speaking from paradise?" I asked.

"Oh, we're in a very nice house, Constance and I; and we're just about having a little supper. I wish you were here, but that can't be arranged. No; really it can't! We shall be motoring back to Barton to-morrow and hope you can join us. Let us have luncheon and motor up together."

When I suggested that I call for them she laughed gayly.

"That would be telling things! And we musn't spoil everything when everything is going so beautifully."

Remembering the man I had locked up in the tool-house and the explanations I should have to make sooner or later to the unimaginative Torrence, I wasn't wholly convinced of the general beauty of the prospect.

"Montani was in the theater," I suggested.

Her laughter rippled merrily over the wire. "Oh, he tried to follow us in a taxi! We had a great time throwing him off in the park. I'm not sure he isn't sitting on the curb right now watching the house ungraciously."

"You have the fan with you; Montani jumped right out of his seat

"Telephone Call, Sir."

when you opened it in the theater."

This she received with more laughter; Montani amused her immensely, she said. She wasn't in the least afraid of him. Returning to the matter of the luncheon, she suggested the Tyringham.

"You know, I want very much to see Mr. Bashford's old home and the place all our veteran retainers came from. At one?—yes. Good night!"

Alice and Mrs. Farnsworth reached the Tyringham on time to the minute. As I had spent the morning on a bench in the park, analyzing my problems, I found their good humor a trifle jarring.

"You don't seem a bit glad to see us," Alice complained as she drew off her gloves. "How can any one be anything but happy after seeing that delicious 'Cock Robin'? It is so deliciously droll."

"I haven't," I remarked with an attempt at severity, "quite your knack of ignoring disagreeable facts. There was Montani right in front of me, jumping like a jack-in-the-box every time you flourished your fan. There's that fellow we've got locked up at Barton——"

"Just hear the man, Constance!" she interrupted with her adorable laugh. "We were thinking that he was only beginning to see things our way, the only true way, the jolly way, and here he cometh like a melancholy Jacques! We'll have none of it!"

"We must confess," said Mrs. Farnsworth conciliatingly, "that Mr. Singleton is passing through a severe trial. We precipitated ourselves upon him without warning, and immediately involved him in a mesh of mystery. His imagination must have time to adjust itself."

They were spoiling my appetite; I was perfectly aware of that. I had ordered the best luncheon I knew how to compose, and they were doing full justice to it; but I was acting, I knew, like a resentful boy.

"I love you that way," said Alice as I stared vacantly at my plate. "But you really are not making yourself disagreeable to us—really he is not, Constance!"

Mrs. Farnsworth affirmed this. I knew that I was merely being rude, and the consciousness of this was not uplifting. At the luncheon hour the influx of shoppers gives the Tyringham a cheery tone, and all about us were people apparently conversing sanely and happily. The appearance of Uncle Bash's ghost in the familiar dining room would have been a welcome diversion. I was speculating as to just what he would say about his widow and the whole mess at Barton when Mrs. Farnsworth addressed me pleadingly.

"If you knew that we want you to play with us only a few days longer—three days, shall we say, Alice?—if you knew that then we'll untangle everything, wouldn't you be nice—very nice?"

In spite of myself I couldn't resist this appeal. I was more and more impressed by the fineness, the charm of Mrs. Farnsworth. When she dropped the make-believe foolishness in which she indulged quite as amusingly as Alice, she appeared to be a very sensible person. The humor danced in her eyes now, but her glance was more than an appeal; it was a command.

"If you knew that our troubles are not at all the troubles you're thinking about, but very different—"

"Please pardon me," I muttered humbly, and wished that Alice were not so bewitching in a sailor hat. It may have have been the hat or only Mrs. Farnsworth's pleading tone that brought me to a friendlier attitude toward the universe and its visible inhabitants. The crowd thinned out, but we lingered, talking of all manner of things.

"We must come in again very soon," said Alice. "And next time we shan't run away, which was very naughty. I suppose when you begin a story you just have to keep it going or it will die on your hands. That's the way with our story, you know. Of course it's unkind to mystify you; but you are in the story just as we are."

My mystification was certainly deep enough without this suggestion that I was a mere character in a tale whose awkward beginning aroused only the gravest apprehensions as to the conclusion. She looked at her watch and continued: "I'm so absurd—really I am, in ever so many ways, that no one would ever put me in a book. Everyone would say no such person ever existed! It's incredible! And so I have to pretend I'm in a story all the time. It's the only way I can keep happy. And so many people are in my story now, not only Montani and the poor fellow locked up at Barton—oh, what if he should escape! Constance, it would be splendid if he should escape!"

"You didn't finish your enumeration of characters," I suggested. "Is my part an important one or am I only a lay figure?"

"My dear boy," cried Mrs. Farnsworth, "you are the hero! You have been the hero from the hour the story began. If you should desert us now, whatever should we do?"

"If I'm the hero," I replied in her own key, "I shall begin making love to Alice at once."

Alice, far from being disturbed by my declaration, nodded her head approvingly.

"Oh, we had expected that! But you needn't be in a hurry. In a story like this one, that runs right on from day to day, we must leave a lot to chance. And there are ever so many chances—"

"Not all on the side of failure, I hope?"

"We must be going." She laughed. I wished she hadn't that characteristic little turn of the head that was so beguiling!

Folly rode with us all the way to Barton. If anything sensible was uttered on the drive, I can't recall it. Our talk, chiefly of knights and ladies, and wild flights from imaginary enemies, had the effect of spurring Flynn to perilous spurts of speed.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Indians and Japanese.

Professor Mena, Mexican scientist, went to Tehuacan in 1903 to investigate a story that in small towns near by Chinese talked in their own tongue to the Indians and were perfectly understood. He found the legend false. Japanese scholars visiting the Mexican museum have been surprised to find articles used by the Indians exactly the same as those used by Japanese peasants.

Filipino Wife's Status.

In the Philippine islands, when women marry, they go into partnership with their husbands. While the men handle the workers, the women attend to the finance, act as cashiers, pay the workers and oversee much of the business. They also have equality with the men in everything except voting.

Why Not Now?

By REV. W. W. KETCHUM

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TEXT.—Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation. —II Cor. 6:2.

You expect to become a Christian some day, well then, why not now?

Do you delay because you feel that there is time enough? Do not be deceived by this suggestion of Satan, who would have all people put off their decision to become Christians until it is too late.

When I was a boy in grammar school, we used to have a principal who every day or so would enter the schoolroom, and slowly passing through it, say in measured tones, "Pro-cras-ti-nation—is—the—thief—of—time." Then quietly, without another word, he would pass out. His purpose was to impress upon his boys and girls that they should not put off till tomorrow, or from day to day, that which should be done at once. It seems to me that in our text God is in effect saying the same thing when he tells us, "Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

"No Promise of Tomorrow."

One time while being driven in the country to minister at the funeral of a man who had died very suddenly, I was surprised at the wisdom shown by the wayward young man who was conveying me. There was a lull in the conversation. Then suddenly he broke forth with this startling fact: "You know, we have no promise of a tomorrow." What truth there is in that statement—"No promise of a tomorrow." And yet, how heedless we are of the fact it so succinctly sets forth. We go on neglecting to do that which is of such moment to us, actually gambling with time and with our souls as the stake. No promise of a tomorrow is what God is saying in the words of our text.

Again, are you putting off your decision to become a Christian, because you feel that you want first to have a good time?

What a specious argument that is, and how Satan does use it, especially to deceive young people. He would try to make them believe that they say good-by to all the good times when they become Christians; but that is not so, for there is nothing "good" that a person has to give up to become a Christian. To be sure, there are things that are bad and harmful that must be given up, and these the Devil camouflages to make them look good to people. He succeeds surprisingly well, for folks are easily fooled by the enemy of human souls and often they do not awaken to the fact that they have been deceived until it is too late.

What we need to do is to estimate the real value of things. Who that is wise would buy glass jewels for diamonds, or accept fools' gold for the genuine? If we scrape beneath the tinsel with which Satan covers things that are bad, to make them look good, and if we carefully weigh everything he offers us in the balances of eternity, we shall discover their worthlessness; everything he offers, though it give pleasure for a season, "at last," as Solomon said of the wine cup, "it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder."

Good Times for the Christian.

Christ on the other hand offers all that is good and worthwhile in this life and the life to come. The really good times are for the Christian, and if any one on earth can enjoy himself, it is the person whose life has been enlarged by the coming into it of Christ. He it is who not only gives life, but gives it abundantly. This is true in this life, because Christ enlarges a person's capacity for enjoyment.

We frankly admit that there are restrictions and limitations for the Christian; but he who says that there are restrictions and limitations of real life is false. The things that must be cut off are those that make for death. The surgeon's knife cuts out a cancer, but a cancer makes for death; and so do those things that the person who would be a Christian must cut out of his life. The very cutting out of these things sets a person free for the real pleasure of life.

Is it not a mean thing to choose the pleasures of sin for a season, and then, when the candle of life has almost burned itself out, fling ourselves upon God's mercy? To such who so choose, expecting to become Christians when they are about to die, that they may thereby escape hell and gain heaven, God holds out no promise of salvation. That people are saved at the last moment of life, as was the thief on the cross, we know, but who dare say that the one who chooses to refuse the salvation God offers now shall ever have another proffer of mercy?

There is a time, we know not when;
A place, we know not where,
That seals the destiny of man
For glory or despair.
"Behold, now is the accepted time;
behold, now is the day of salvation."